

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL SERVICES POLICY AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON  
21 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**Membership**

**Councillors**

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| * Barry Aspinell          | * Stephen Mayzes               |
| * Susan Barker (Chairman) | * Gerard McEwen                |
| * John Dornan             | * Linda Mead (Vice-Chairman)   |
| * Eddie Johnson           | Don Morris                     |
| John Knapman              | * Anne Turrell (Vice-Chairman) |
| * Michael Lager           |                                |
| * Present                 |                                |

**30. Apologies and Substitute Notices**

Apologies were received from Councillor John Knapman, with his Councillor substitute Mavis Webster, and Councillor Don Morris.

**31. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

**32. Minutes**

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Councillors Knapman and Morris to be added under Membership.
- Item 21 should state Councillors Aspinell's ex wife is currently employed as a teacher.

**33. The Essex Registration Service**

The Committee noted report CS/10/09 and received a verbal presentation from Deputy County Solicitor Alex Hallam.

The Committee were advised of changes to the Central Government's General Register Office (GRO) which will pass the administration of services to Local Authorities, and of the Council's plans to create a single district registration service with a view to eliminate administrative overlap. The current offices in Brentwood have been identified as a suitable location for the central office and are able to accommodate the relocation of staff. Alex highlighted the fact that the planned changes to administrative functions will not have a negative impact on members of the public who will still be able to access the service as they do now; furthermore there is no indication that centralising the administrative functions will

increase foot traffic at any of the 8 district offices. The Committee heard that registration staff work in approved premises as well as registration offices.

Under the new system births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships could be registered at a location of choice. The current computerised diary system allows staff at Contact Essex and Registrars to make appointments. It is also hoped that paper records dating back to 1837 could be transferred to a virtual repository; however Members were advised that the infrastructure to support this is not in place at this time.

Members were advised that the registration service is 72% self funded and that the extra post required to carry out inspection work to meet GRO standards would be funded within current resources. Members heard that half of the staff within the Registration Service are employed on a sessional basis to accommodate weekend commitments. Members asked the experience of other authorities who moved to a single district. It was explained that some authorities had not had positive experiences although it was noted that implications will differ from county to county depending on the geography and size.

Members suggested that changes imposed from central government would simply transfer costs to local authorities and called for accurate and not simulated costs to be forwarded for consideration. The Governance Officer will source this information from the Registration Service Business Development Manager, Roger Robbins. It was advised that consultation results are being collated and that the Registration Service were liaising with GRO to ensure knowledge is appropriately disseminated.

#### **34. Flood and Water Management Bill Consultation**

Members noted reports CS/11/09 and CS/12/09. Members highlighted that they were still unsure of the finance streams for this work and called for literal clarification of responsibilities and boundaries were still required.

#### **35. Forward Look**

Members noted report CS/13/09.

#### **36. Dates of Future meetings**

Members noted the dates for future meetings of the committee

#### **37. Visit to Contact Essex**

Members considered the scoping document and agreed to add the visit onto the forward look. Members were encouraged to visit the centre individually.

#### **38. Exclusion of the Public**

To consider whether the public (including the press) should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Resolved:**

That the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972: (Paragraph 4 relating to labour matters)

**(Business taken in private)****39. The Essex People Strategy**

The Committee noted report CS/14/09.

**40. Capita Resourcing**

The Committee noted report CS/15/09. it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be convened to conduct a scrutiny review into this topic.

There being no urgent Part II business the public meeting closed at 11:35am

Chairman  
19 October 2009